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ed a governor for Lebanon before the latter was displaced by the French (whose historic interests in Lebanon had been recognized by the British Government in the correspondence with the Sharif Husain). While Faisal and Lawrence were presenting the Arab case to the Paris Peace Conference, the French were consolidating their military hold on the Levant. Eventually Faisal and Clemenceau came to a provisional agreement for an autonomous Syrian state under the tutelage of France (as conceded by Britain in the secret Sykes–Picot Agreement of 1916, which had not been communicated at the time to the Sharif and his sons); but French tutelage was not acceptable to the Damascus politicians who in March 1920 proclaimed Faisal King of an independent Syrian state. In the following month, however, the French obtained Britain's agreement, at the San Remo Conference, to their exercising a Mandate over Syria as well as Lebanon; the new Mandatary defeated Faisal's little army at Maisalun on 25 July 1920 and entered into possession of Damascus, from which Faisal fled into exile.

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The French Mandate, 1920–45

Since Crusader times, France had been interested in protecting the Christians of the Levant, and the twentieth century gave her the added incentive of creating a counter-balance to Britain's growing influence in the Middle East. The Maronites welcomed the French, and the latter accordingly expanded the small area of the Sanjaq of Lebanon to include the cities of Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon, as well as the Biqaa, so as to give this 'Greater Lebanon' the largest possible area in which there would be no danger of a Muslim majority. The French applied to Syria the principle of *divide et impera* and four separate states were set up: that of the Alawis (Jebel Ansariya, including Latakia), that of the Jebel Druze, and Damascus and Aleppo (in 1925 combined into a single state of Syria). The French further encouraged separatism in the Jezira, and designated the area of Antioch and Alexandretta (in which the largest linguistic community was the Turkish) as an autonomous sanjaq.

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The majority of Syrians never readily accepted French rule and risings occurred in the Ansariya, near Aleppo, and near Deir ez-Zor; these were soon put down but a greater rebellion began in the Jebel Druze in 1925 and spread to Damascus and to Hama. The French bombarded Damascus in October 1925 and in May 1926 but did not succeed in completely quelling the revolt until August 1927. Thereafter negotiations for a treaty stumbled through the years, punctuated by disturbances, broken off from time to time and marked throughout by bitter-

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new on both sides. In Syria (and to a lesser degree, in Lebanon) the possibility of long-term co-operation between the nationalist politicians and the Mandatary was frustrated alike by the attitude of most French officials and by that of the local urban populations who, though they later signed the 1936 treaty, desired full self-government.[1] The advent to power in France of the Front Populaire in 1936 eased the situation: treaties with Syria and Lebanon were negotiated whereby the Mandate was to be transformed into an alliance with independent states, but under which France could still maintain troops in the Levant. However, the French Parliament was unwilling to ratify the Syrian treaty under the lengthening shadow of the impending Second World War, and Syrian indignation was increased when the need for Turkey's friendship led France in 1939 to cede to Turkey the Sanjaq of Alexandretta, afterwards renamed Hatay. Leading Syrian politicians refused to co-operate with the French on these terms, and on the eve of the outbreak of war the French High Commissioner once again suspended the Syrian constitution and governed the country through French and Syrian officials; the same procedure was applied to Lebanon after the outbreak of war.

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When metropolitan France fell in 1940 the Mandate was carried on by the Vichy Government until the latter's acquiescence in the use of the Levant airfields by the German air force necessitated the intervention of British and Free French forces in June 1941. After a short but bitter campaign, the Vichy forces signed an armistice in July 1941. In the struggle between the Allies and the Axis and between Vichy and de Gaulle the Syrians and Lebanese took no part, but their independence had been promised by the Allied Command. On behalf of the Free French, General Catroux, in a statement on 8 June 1941, proclaimed the end of the Mandate, but in fact the Free French regarded themselves as trustees for France's position, seeking to maintain them by installing Syrian and Lebanese supporters of France in the seats of authority. The Free French had, however, eventually to yield to the demand for popular elections, which was supported by the British Government as soon as the victory at al-Alamain (October 1942) had finally removed the threat of Axis invasion from the Middle East. In Syria the elections of 1943 brought into office the National Bloc with Shukri al-Quwatli as President of the Republic and Saadullah Jabri, Jamil Mardam, and Faris al-Khouri as parliamentary leaders. In the Lebanon also nationalists were successful and the leader of the 'Constitutional Bloc',

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[1] For details, see A. H. Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon* (London, RIIA, 1946).

648 had made for submitting their measures to the Chamber, where
643 it was carried by 48 votes to none on the 8th. The amendments affected the following Articles of the Constitution:

Article 1. References to the Mandatory Power and the League of Nations were eliminated, and Lebanon was described as 'a sovereign State'.

Article 11. French was no longer described as an official language.

Article 52. The treaty-making power was no longer to be limited by the reservations laid down in the Mandate.

Articles 90-94. These were annulled. They had provided that the exercise of the constitutional powers of Lebanese authorities should be subject to the maintenance of the Mandatory's rights and obligations; that Lebanon should eventually enter the League of Nations through the good offices of the Mandatory; that good relations would be maintained with 'the neighbouring countries under French Mandate'; that disputes liable to lead to war should be submitted to the Mandatory's arbitration; and that agreements would be reached between Lebanon and France for the representation of the former, in countries where Lebanese residents were numerous, by means of attachés in French diplomatic and consular missions.

Articles 95 and 102. References to the Mandate were omitted.

648 On November 10th, two days after the passage of these
• 649 amendments through the Chamber, M. Helleu returned from
644 a visit to Algiers. In the early hours of the following morning the Lebanese President and the majority of the Ministers were, by his order, arrested and removed from Beirut. A few hours later the Delegate-General issued decrees declaring the amendments null and void, suspending the Constitution, dissolving the Chamber and appointing Emile Edde—Bishara al-Khuri's unsuccessful opponent in the recent elections—as Head of the State and the Government.

These measures caused immediate and vigorous reactions, both in Lebanon and elsewhere. Throughout the next eleven days there was a general strike in the Lebanese towns; shops were shut, the ordinary newspapers ceased to appear and there were demonstrations in the streets. These led to clashes with

French troops, and to the death or injury of a number of civilians. The two Ministers who had not been arrested, together with a majority of the Deputies, continued to assert their authority from a mountain retreat and began to organize an armed force.

During these critical days the Lebanese people displayed a striking unity. The national cause took precedence over deep-seated sectarian conflicts, and very few even among the Maronites dissociated themselves from the united front. Edde failed to form a political cabinet, and was forced to attempt the expedient of a council of civil servants.

Nevertheless, the country remained outwardly calm. That the Lebanese did not resort to an armed rising was due in large part to the confidence of their leaders in the value of the diplomatic support which they received from the Governments of the independent Arab States, of the United States and of Great Britain. The British attitude was defined by Mr. Law in the House of Commons on November 23rd:

> 'The interest of His Majesty's Government in this dispute is twofold. First of all, we have endorsed the promises of independence given to the Lebanese people by General Catroux in 1941. His Majesty's Government have followed with sympathy and interest the subsequent development of constitutional government in the Lebanon. Secondly, the Lebanon is of vital importance to the war effort both as an operational base and from the point of view of communications. Any threat of a breakdown of law and order is therefore of direct concern to His Majesty's Government.'

Impressed by the gravity of the situation created by M. Helleu's drastic action, the C.F.L.N. sent General Catroux to take charge in Beirut. He arrived there on the 19th and, having examined the situation in all its aspects, recommended the reinstatement of the Lebanese President, the release of the imprisoned Ministers and the recall of M. Helleu. Acceptance of this programme was announced in Algiers on the 21st, and on the following day the Lebanese leaders returned to Beirut in triumph. It was at once apparent that the reinstatement of the Ministers, as well as of the President, was inevitable, and the French authorities agreed to this further concession. Furthermore, M. Chataigneau, who had provisionally taken M. Helleu's place as Delegate-General, cancelled the decrees

of November 11th with the exception of that which declared the constitutional amendments null and void.

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The acute crisis was now over, but the problem from which it had sprung was still unsolved. When the Lebanese Chamber re-assembled, the Premier asserted his Government's view that the reforms of November 8th were still in force. Moreover, the Syrian authorities lost no time, once the tension in Lebanon was relaxed, in taking parallel action. At an extraordinary session of the Syrian Chamber on January 24th, 1944, the President of the Republic and the Deputies took an oath of allegiance to a new Constitution which comprised Articles 1-115 of the existing text. The effect of this was to annul Article 116. Earlier, on December 1st, the Syrian Premier had declared that Syria did not recognize the Mandate, and was not willing to conclude a Treaty as a condition of the transfer of powers which properly belonged to her; had demanded the surrender by the French of all the attributes of sovereignty, under those limitations only which were necessitated by the state of war; and had affirmed that the Syrian and Lebanese Governments were in agreement on the administration of the common interests.

The C.F.L.N. left these claims and assertions unchallenged, and announced that General Catroux would again go to Beirut, this time for the purpose of negotiating with the two Governments on the transfer of powers. The negotiations resulted in an agreement, concluded on December 22nd, which provided that the powers previously exercised by French authorities in the name of the Syrian and Lebanese Governments should be transferred to their control. They would take over the services included in the category of Common Interests as from January 1st, and other powers by specific agreements still to be concluded. Thus, by the beginning of 1944, the two States had survived a sharp test of their will to independence and had extended the range of their autonomous administration.

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In the course of the year 1944 there were a number of changes in the political situation in Syria and Lebanon. Some of these changes were of no more than local importance.